

# Leadership Doctrine — Turning Challenge Into Opportunity

General Dennis J. Reimer, US Army

**H**ALF A WORLD from home, Private First Class (PFC) Jarred King stood outside the Bosnian Serb headquarters in Sokolac, Bosnia-Herzegovina, waiting for his major, who was inside meeting with a group of local faction leaders. A former Bosnian Serb army commander had been arrested, and when the Serbs learned of the arrest they were angry. Without warning, an agitated mob descended on King, demanding he give up his weapon. Though surrounded, King refused. Instead, he calmly slung his M-16 rifle, ignoring the taunts and threats of the crowd. After a tense stand-off, the Bosnian Serbs released King and his major. When King returned to his unit, the young soldier admitted he had been scared but said he had kept faith in himself and his unit. He was confident that if something happened, help would be on the way.

King's extraordinary display of self-composure and courage say a great deal about the kind of soldiers we have in today's Army. It says a lot about training, values and teamwork—and about the bonds of confidence and trust between leaders and soldiers that yield effective combat units. Building soldiers like King demands quality training, skilled mentors and a strong, positive values-based command environment. These kind of soldiers truly are our credentials.

Leadership doctrine is the critical part of the equation and has always been an important part of our successes. It pulls our efforts together, providing focus, purpose and direction. Through 224 years of serving, fighting and dying for their country, American soldiers have learned that the fundamental principles of leadership are important—and that we must have leaders who truly care about their soldiers and understand Army doctrine.

Our leadership doctrine continually evolves, and in periods of transition such as that of today, we put

great effort into capturing lessons learned and revising doctrine to meet current and future challenges. If you compare our newly revised doctrine—US Army Field Manual (FM) 22-100, *Army Leadership*—with previous versions, you will find a clear thread of continuity woven through the Army's fundamental leadership principles. You will also find many additions that recognize our changing environment and enumerate the leadership skills, knowledge and attributes our Army will need today and tomorrow. We developed the new FM 22-100 with input from leaders at all levels throughout the Army. I am very pleased with both the development process and the product. It is already starting to draw interest from other organizations, impressed by the Army's leadership model.

Developing leadership doctrine does not end with the distribution of the new field manual. We are already addressing the future requirements of Army leadership and the development process we will need for the Army After Next. To investigate the future, we will use the newly designated Strike Force as a leader-development laboratory. Our intent is to explore and test leadership techniques and procedures that will provide the adaptable leaders, soldiers and units we will sorely need in the information age.

## Change is Leader-Intensive

Today's tasks are tough, no question about it. When we got a good look at the post-Cold War world, it did not take us long to figure out we were going to be facing some real leadership challenges—challenges that would be with us for the foreseeable future. Over the past decade, we have learned we should not place much confidence in anyone's ability to accurately predict the future. We cannot be 100-percent sure where America's global leadership role will take us or what missions we



A troop guards perimeter between Cap-Haitien and a secured airfield during Operation Uphold Democracy.

US Army

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will be asked to perform. The Army needs soldiers ready for war and prepared to serve many roles in peace. But most of all, we need leaders who are comfortable with the uncertainties of change and who know how to bring out the best in our soldiers—*leadership turns challenges into opportunities.*

The Army's operations tempo has exceeded our wildest expectations. The rate at which we use the Army has increased more than 300 percent since the Cold War's end. During the Cold War's 50 years, we used land forces on 10 major operations. Since 1989, the Army has sent soldiers on 32 major operations. On Christmas Eve 1998, we had 144,313 Active and Reserve Component soldiers in 65 different countries doing everything from deterring Iraq and North Korea, to keeping the fragile peace in Bosnia and assisting civilian authorities in Central America in the wake of Hurricane Mitch. Short of war, our Army has never been so busy.

We have a readiness challenge that is unprecedented in American military history. The Army has to change—it must transform itself into a force optimized to conduct information-age military operations. We are doing this, but we must also constantly remember there are no "time-outs" to prepare for the future. In the midst of transforming itself, the Army must continually provide strategically adaptive, trained and ready forces. In short, we must be trained and ready today—and tomorrow. Meeting these requirements simultaneously is no easy task.

The pressures of service, diversity of missions, uncertainties of change and lack of time and resources to accomplish everything we want to do weighs on all of us. Some leaders are concerned about "zero defects,"—worrying that they must do more with less—and that even if they do their best and still make a mistake, their careers will never recover. Others are anxious that, in the competi-



An Army Military Police element patrols Port-Au-Prince, Haiti, during Operation Uphold Democracy

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tion to succeed in a smaller force, some will put "self" before "selfless service," focusing on advancing their own careers at their soldiers' expense. These concerns are understandable. The Army has never been immune to ethical challenges, and uneasiness over these issues is always heightened during turbulent periods of transition. These challenges are very real and extremely important and we must confront them head-on. These concerns reinforce the argument that we need to take a long, hard look at leadership in America's Army and make sure we have the right doctrine and the right people to guide the force into the 21st century.

### **The Army is People**

As we thought about publishing new leadership doctrine for the future, we reflected a great deal on our own past. Today's most senior leaders served in Vietnam and came of age in the post-Vietnam Army. I can clearly remember the concerns and

questions we had as young officers in the throes of that period of change. The Army was a different force then—and we had a front-row seat to observe everything that went into producing an army in crisis. We had too much obsolete, broken equipment; too many poorly educated, unmotivated and undisciplined soldiers; unrealistic training; and undermanned units. In essence, we became an Army that had lost its soul—a "hollow army." We knew the Army faced an incredible challenge in turning the force around. At the same time, we were on the "express train" for change, transforming a draftee Army, tarred with the bitter legacy of Vietnam, into an All-Volunteer Force that could stare down Soviet power in Europe.

General Creighton W. Abrams, one of the senior leaders who helped lead the Army through that difficult period, focused our efforts by constantly reminding us "The Army is not made up of people, the Army *is* people." We had many problems, from

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old equipment to empty squads, but if we wanted to transform the Army through that maelstrom of change, we had to focus on the most important thing—the matter over which we had the greatest influence—how we led our people. The Army underwent an “ethical revolution,” relooking how it taught, evaluated, mentored and inspired its leaders. We focused on:

- Setting and enforcing standards.
- Doing what is right—legally and morally.
- Being a values-based organization.
- Treating soldiers with dignity and respect.
- Underwriting the honest mistakes of our subordinates, viewing those mistakes as opportunities to learn rather than a mark of failure.

These ideas became the core of what every professional officer and noncommissioned officer (NCO) believed. We had to have that “ethical” revolution to rebuild the trust and confidence between senior and junior leaders and between leaders and their soldiers. This ethical revolution provided the catalyst for the Army’s training revolution. You could not have combat training centers and after-action reviews without leaders and soldiers who had the assurance they could make honest mistakes and learn from them. This was not about *zero defects*—it was about learning our trade and taking care of soldiers.

Leadership gave our soldiers the confidence to shed their blinders and not dwell on the Army’s shortfalls by concentrating on the fundamentals of realistic training and focusing on facing future challenges. It took more than leadership to turn the Army around, but leadership was the key ingredient—as it always is. Eventually we added

modernized equipment, filled the ranks with quality soldiers and rewrote our warfighting doctrine. On that solid foundation, we built the finest army in modern history.

We have not forgotten the lessons of the “hollow army.” There is not a senior leader today who would stand by and let the Army become a hollow force again. Senior leaders are working hard to ensure there are adequate resources, that we enlist sufficient quality soldiers, that we take care of our people and continue to modernize the force. At the same time, we have to make sure the base remains rock-solid. The past has taught us well that you can never take leadership for granted.

Today, we are still enjoying the fruits of our post-Vietnam War transformation. The beneficiaries of that leadership renaissance are our soldiers and the nation. No force in history has matched the caliber of NCO leaders that we have today. Our officer corps has the education, experience and imagination to lead in demanding circumstances and prepare soldiers for very diverse missions. When they see honorable and competent examples, soldiers respond in kind. Young men and women—like PFC King—train for important missions, operate in dangerous environments and improve conditions wherever they go. They trust their leaders and their fellow soldiers—they trust in themselves.

The past decade speaks for itself—32 major operations executed with skill, discipline and efficiency. That is a record any force would be proud to own. Our achievements have not gone unrecognized. A recent Harris Poll found that Americans rated the military as the most respected institution in the country. There is a reason for that—the unselfish service and sacrifice of the American soldier. Retention in the Army at all ranks remains high, another clear indicator that we are a special profession. We are an Army with the right stuff. With our updated leadership doctrine, a history of tradition based upon values and leaders who truly care about their soldiers, we can turn tomorrow’s challenges into unprecedented opportunities. **MR**

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